

Volunteer Vacations

What are Volunteer Vacations?

American Hiking Society's Volunteer Vacations are a series of week-long trail work projects on America's public lands, including national parks and forests, Bureau of Land Management lands, wildlife refuges, nature preserves, state parks, and education centers. Each crew consists of six to 15 volunteers accompanied by a crew leader. Trips involve backpacking or day hiking and accommodations vary from primitive campsites to bunkhouses or cabins. Hosts provide tools and supervision, and crews perform a variety of tasks such as trail maintenance and construction, bridge and shelter renovation and native species reestablishment. Each year American Hiking facilitates approximately 65 Volunteer Vacations across the U.S., placing 600 to 700 volunteers on the ground to give back to the land they love.

Why are Volunteer Vacations important?

The U.S. boasts an incredible network of more than 200,000 miles of trails. These trails don't receive the funding they need, resulting in large maintenance backlogs, deteriorating infrastructure, insufficient staffing and negative impacts to resources. Volunteer Vacations provide critical sweat equity and resources to meet under-funded trail program needs and help keep trails open, safe and enjoyable today and for future generations.

Who participates in Volunteer Vacations?

Volunteers come from all walks of life and across the country. Age ranges from 14 to 80 and no experience is necessary (unless indicated for specific trips). American Hiking offers family-friendly trips, along with options for college students to serve over school breaks. Volunteers pay a modest registration fee and contribute time, energy and enthusiasm. Some volunteer to get in shape and some want to meet people with similar interests. All come away with a sense of pride and accomplishment for the work they have achieved.

"I've never had so much fun working so hard,"

-Pat Hart, *Idaho Panhandle National Forest Host and Volunteer Vacations Participant*

"All of us had the trip of a lifetime, The impact of our actions will last long after we left the park."

-Amanda Guenther, *Alternative Break Participant*

For more information, contact Libby Wile, Volunteer Programs Manager,
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